THE HEART OF PEACE

BY

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

ST. MARY'S
COLLEGE
OAKLAND, - CAL.

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BY REV. T. CALLAGHAN

I. THE HEART OF PEACE

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BY REV. T. CALLAGHAN

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THE HEART OF PEACE

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A GEORGIC

Come, tender Age, contain my blood,
And tame it to thy gentler moods,
From fields where once it ran in flood,
Down into woodland solitudes.
There, where the boughs
Soft music make,
I hear the wood-dove's voice awake:
"Take two cows, Taffy! Taffy, take
Two cows!"

I am not he who comes for cows;
I seek no herd or grazing-plot:
Here, under roof of rustling boughs,
O tempting voice, you tempt me not!
But oh, the meek,
The pleading tone,
With which she makes the theft her own!—
"Take two cows, Taffy! Taffy, take
Two cows!"

A GEORGIC

No Welshman I: but if I were,
That word should stand for wisdom now;
And blither than the wind I'd fare,
For change of heart and change of air,
Back to my native wilds, and there
Get me three acres and a cow;
And gambling on that smaller stake
A cleaner reputation make,
In honest minds, than *he* does now! —
And hear among the waving boughs
That voice which so much grace allows:
"Take *two* cows, Taffy! Taffy, take
Two cows!"

THE CALL OF THE BLOOD

Where, among the midland hills,
Wooded blue the distance fills,
Years ere I became a man
Western ways my fancy ran:
Ere its tide was up to flood
Westward, westward turned my blood.

Hills on which the day went down,
Mists that rose from Malvern town,
Severn's windings, Worcester's towers
Beaconed all my boyhood's hours:
Ere my feet could run a mile
How the distance seemed to smile!

Over highways far descried
East and west the world went wide;
But the steeps of rising day
Never won my heart away:
Twilight fell, and in my breast
Burned the fever of the west.

Oft since then, from mart and street
Westward have I turned my feet,
Facing, as the daylight fails,
The dark border-land of Wales —
Hills which keep with rugged face
Watch against an alien race.

Those dark hills, by blood embrued,
Hold embraced a deathless feud;
There embosomed, buried deep,
How the murdered ages sleep!
In the land for which I pine
Race is still the border-line.

Challenged by that stubborn face,
I confess my English race;
From my blood an answer runs —
"You I love, but not your sons!"
'Tis the west land, not its breed,
Spurs my eager feet to speed.

'Mid the silence of her hills
Soft and clear the curlew shrills,
Out across a driven sky
Wind-blown plovers beat and cry,

Still with passionate unrest
Guarding the unsheltered nest.

Wind and wasteland, sound and sight,
Minister to my delight;
Only at some lonely farm
Darts the look suspecting harm;
Only man, on man his mate,
Turns the counter glance of hate.

English foot on field or hill
Seems to him invasion still;
Quick at sight his thought grows hot,—
You are that which he is not:
Though it held no horse before,
Taffy locks his stable door!

Ere you question, Taffy cries:
"I am telling you no lies!"
Ere you hint a disbelief,
Taffy swears he is no thief:
Loudly he, with braggart stir,
Boasts a blameless character.

Aye, ye hills, 'tis true indeed,—
I am of an alien breed;

THE CALL OF THE BLOOD

All the wrong your bards have sung
Sharpens still the Welshman's tongue;
He, for fear lest foe go fed,
Puts no salt into his bread!

Blood, which is not mine to change,
Draws me west, but makes it strange:
From the hills which hem me round
Ever comes a warning sound:
"Till the friendly life-blood fails,
Keep you from the men of Wales!"

PRESENTED TO ST. MARY'S
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PAX VOBISCUM

Come, and give me a hand, then;
And I will give you a mind,
And a place for your feet to stand then,
Which only the wise can find.

Patient it there lies waiting
The look of the willing eye:
O hearts, that have turned from hating,
How oft have ye passed it by!

Ye have battled in many places,
And many foul deeds have done;
But back with their old embraces
Come moon, and stars, and sun.

Ye have taken your toll, and given
Slaughter for slaughter again;
But alike to all who have striven
Are sunlight, and wind, and rain.

These are the ancient givers,
  Merciful, just, and free,
As the downward flowing of rivers
  To the need of a wave-worn sea.

For the body is more than raiment,
  The life much better than meat;
And having for these made payment,
  The comfort of rest is sweet.

Let your raiment henceforth be kindness,
  Your meat the service of man;
To lift from his eyes the blindness
  Which fell when sorrow began.

Where milk and honey are flowing,
  Let meekness possess the earth,
And your reaping be as your sowing
  In the goodly field of man's worth.

So, in the dwellings of mortals,
  Forgiveness shall spring like grass,
And love be a light in your portals,
  And sorrow as winds that pass;

And round you, like sons and daughters
  Of hearts that have ceased to grieve,
Come the murmur of windless waters,
  And the singing silence of eve.

THE LAND OF PROMISE

Fair camp of God, how goodly are thy tents,
  Within whose midst the milk and honey flow!
For thee the promised land gives forth her scents,
  For thee the hanging garden crowned with snow,

And softer dews than Hermon's, and more shade
  Than rocks beneath the boughs of Lebanon;
For thee, O fair delight, all things were made,
  And they which marred them, the false gods, are gone.

For this is never Canaan's land, but Greece,
  Where shines the face and not the frown of God;
And never Gideon's but Jason's fleece;
  And this Apollo's bough, not Aaron's rod.

The night breathes warm, and the tent doors are wide;
And fleece and bough lie close against thy side.

EVENSONG

Weary pilgrim, rest thy powers!
Nature hath her reaping hours,
Thou, so rich in memories stored,
Blend thine own with Nature's hoard.
Other milestones distant far,—
See thy last in yonder star!

Where the roseate doors of rest
Open in the deepening west,
O'er thy quarters for this night
Hesperus upholds his light;
And the folding dusk shall bring
Sleep to be thy covering.

Pain and toil, as partners here,
Mingle for remembrance dear;
Couldst thou sever this from these,
Rest were robbed of half her ease;
Could thy heart forget the cost,
Labour done were labour lost.

EVENSONG

Pilgrim, in thine evening skies
Thou canst make no stars arise;
Yet may Time, on gentler stream,
Gather and reflect the gleam,
Where the widening ripples yield
Gleanings from a distant field.

Here, in fellowship with thee,
Earth attains tranquillity:
Through the reaping-field of dreams
Evening draws her shadowy teams,
And a young moon, newly born,
Sets her sickle to the corn.

INVITATION

Softly tread,
Who here arrive!
I am dead,
You are alive.
I am dead: fear not to waken
Dust your footfall leaves unshaken;
But, if ye would share my bed,
Careless livers, softly tread!

Seed and flower
Of bending grasses
Feed the hour
As it passes.
Herein dust, which once was flesh,
Keeps a faded memory fresh;
Herein flesh, which once was dust,
Gives to earth a standing trust.

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Evening rose from a bed of rain,
And out of the west day dawned again;
With outstretched fingers of falling light
She touched the tree-tops and made them bright;
And under the leaves, a-spark with dew,
The cry of the blackbird sparkled too;
And every hillock, and glade, and tree
Was filled with the makings of melody,
As the dying light streamed miles along
Through murmur of water, and leaf, and song.

Then out of the east, in a paling mist,
The dead-faced moon came up to be kissed:
Slow and solemn we watched her rise,
A face of wonder with cavernous eyes.
There life is changeless and time without worth,
There nothing dies or is brought to birth;
Her day is done, she is filled with dearth,
Old she looks to the young green earth,

Old as the foam of a frozen shore,
Old — for nothing can age her more!

O young green earth, go down into night,
Rejoice in thy youth till its days are o'er!
Time speeds, life spends; therein is delight,
Till youth and the years can age no more.

THE CALL OF WINTER

Winter gives us warning:
The grass is grey below,
'Tis the first autumn morning,
And spiders' webs show.

The hollyhock that towers
Hangs heavy by the head,
In the cups of the flowers
Cold bees lie dead.

The tree-tops are thinning
Where the fruit stays thick,
And yellow leaves are spinning
To the dead from the quick.

'Tis the old trouble:
Southward goes the sun;
Here, in dust and rubble,
Summer fires are done.

But among the embers
Rake, and we shall find
Something of December's
Nearer to the mind.

Dearer to desire
Shall the long nights be:
Light the winter fire;
Come, and sit with me!

THE TRUE LOVER

So much have friends deceived me
And fickle lovers grieved me,
  Of so much wealth,
  And youth, and health
Hath travelling Time relieved me,
  That being thereby set free,
  Now back I come to Thee.

By such dark fates befriended,
  Deserted, unattended,
  O'er hard and rough
  I've jogged enough,
Down ways that never ended.
  So, footsore though I be,
  Here back I come to Thee.

But wouldst Thou further ask me
Of my deserts, or task me
  To show Thee why,
  Abandoned, I

THE TRUE LOVER

Seek *Thee*,— and so unmask me
  Of any proof or plea
  That brings me back to Thee:

Lord, in such uncouth places
Have I beheld kind faces,
  Where dross for gold
  Was bought and sold
Have met such kind embraces,—
  Such memories, oh see!
  Have brought me back to Thee!

For man, that was Thy making
Sleeps long, but at awaking
  Finds in his breast
  Th' unbidden guest;
So, after all forsaking,
  As blind men made me see,
  Here back I come to Thee.

A thousand times man faileth,
Him trouble so assaileth;
  Heart cries in haste,
  "All flesh is waste!"
Yet here, too, love prevaileth.

So, when thereof I taste
In hearts that are not free
To freedom's Home I haste; —
And back I come to Thee.

FAREWELL TO TOWN

Now with grey hair begins defeat,
  Our sap is running downward;
So turn we from the hurrying street,
  And look no further townward.

'Mid yonder crowds, o'er roof and mart,
  A hundred clocks are striking
The hour for us who played a part
  Which was not to their liking.

And this is wisdom: not to carp
  With wasted breath grown wordy;
For if you harp too long your harp
  Becomes a hurdy-gurdy.

For wearied hand and laboured head
  That fail to gain their guerdon,
Farewell, when once the word is said
  Makes light the lifted burden.

FAREWELL TO TOWN

Farewell! Far harder was the word
To beg what men deny us.
We harped our best; a few have heard,
And others have passed by us!

Leave strumming at the doors of inns
To vagabonds and sharpers!
Where men seek minstrels for their sins
They shall not lack for harpers.

So take the hint, the hands of Time
Are pointing, not unkindly,
Back to the hills we used to climb
While prospects beckoned blindly:

To where, by wood-tracks roughly laid,
With hoofs and cart-ruts dinted,
Some hamlet lies too still for trade,
Where coin was never minted:

Where, cresting lone, a wind-vane stands
High on a time-worn steeple,
And blesses with its circling hands
A still untravelled people.

FAREWELL TO TOWN

There let's away, while blood runs warm,
  Before the heart's beat weakens,
And roam again with cloud and storm
  Along the windy beacons,

And watch by field and wooded coast,
  While flying autumn yellows,
The starling gather up his host,
  The swallow call his fellows.

No need is now for looking back;
  If any wish to find us,
They, too, can follow in our track
  The road we leave behind us.

Or if they liefer would forget,
  'Tis easy to ignore us;
Farther and farther from them yet
  The road that lies before us.

SONG

Down to death, my dear, together
You and I a-drifting go,
Light on life as any feather
Lies on air. Reluctant? No!
Like two kites released from tether,
Wafted through delightful weather,
Down to death, my dear, together
You and I a-drifting go!

PRESENTED TO
BY REV. T. CALL

HENRI POL: BIRD-LOVER

(*Died June* 15, 1918)

Bon soir, bon soir, Monsieur Pol!
For they tell me now you are dead.
Go, then; and peace to your soul,
And warm like a nest be your bed,—
A warm, well-feathered, well-weathered nest,
To give rest to the bird-wise head!

In the place of the Tuileries
It is eleven by the clock,
And the birds wait in the trees,—
They wait; but you do not come.
The small beaks sharpen and knock
On the boughs, and the quick throats trill,
And the bad little voices scold
Their lover because he is late
With the crumbs which he used to spill
In the pathway where other passed,—
Because, in service grown old,

He has failed them at last!
Hark, how they clatter and fret
And complain! — mate clamours to mate,
Crying aloud for the crumbs
Which you gave, which they ate:
Day goes, another day comes; —
Another: when will they forget?

A week, may it be, or a moon,
Or will it run on to a year,
Till the world is again in tune,
And the gardens all full of song —
Babblers begging a boon?
Will the legend of you last so long,
Will the tale be told to their young,
When you no longer appear?

Sweetly a story is told
How birds as they cross the brine,
Bound for the far-off land,—
Veering away to the west
Out of the southward line —
Come to a watery shoal
Sunk in a sea of glass:
No place for a foot to stand.

They poise, they hover and quest
This way and that; but in vain! —
There can they find no rest,—
There having come, they pass.

But because in the days of old
Just there a rock rose dry
For hungry claws to take hold
And tired wings cease to fly,—
There, again and again,
They come; and the years pass by.

So, to the Tuileries,
Shall not the birds still come
When morning clocks strike eleven,
To sit and wait in the trees
For the legendary crumb,
And listen while old birds tell
Their tale which the tolling bell
Ever brings back to mind:
How to the ways of earth,—
Wingless, grey-haired, and kind
To them in their feathered mirth,
Came daily with hands outspread

A gentle Angel from Heaven,
Who was known in the breaking of bread?

And you, Monsieur Pol,— you too,—
Have you a ghost that can walk?
Have you an ear that can hear
Your songsters who prattle and talk
Of you — still of you — still of you?
Is there no room in the grave
For the seeing mind to remember
How boldly they used to behave
In spring, but how in December,
Cowed by the winter's cold,
When the sap of life ran dry,
When the little bodies were old,
And the wings too weak to fly,
They would come at your feet to lie,
So sure you would understand: —
"See me, see how I die!
O friend, reach me a hand!"
And you would gather and fold,
And gently bear them away
From the bitter perishing cold
And blast of the winter's day,
To a corner remote and calm

By the side of your own fire;
And there in a hollowed palm —
With charity filled like balm —
Give them their hearts' desire.

O gentle lover of birds,
Out of your place of rest
Throw to the world a crumb
Of the love that was in your breast,—
The love you bore for the dumb,
The compassion you had for the weak,
The broken, the frail, the meek,
When daily you used to come!

Man has learned how to fly!
His gods have given him wings,
And between them a heart of hate,
With a roaring fire for breath
To obey the bidding of kings:
And out of a storm-rent sky,
And over a stricken earth,
He leavens the land with dearth;
Wherever he goes he stings,
And his droppings are bolts of death!

Unto his hand hath come

The fruit of a thousand sowings;
This is the feast he makes
Out of the grain he hath strown;
So now he beholds the sum
Of all his comings and goings;
Now in the bread he breaks
His kingdom on earth is known.

But when the Judgment comes,
And the Trumpet of Life is blown,
Surely you will arise
And stand among saints without shame.
Then shall the rabble and rout
Of the dead,— the slayer, the slain —
Watch you, patient and meek,
Gentle, tender, and wise,
Empty your pocket of crumbs,
Scattering food to your own,
Filling the hungry beak,
Calling your birds by name,
Choosing, and leading them out; —
There, with the banquet spread,
Unto your lovers make known
Once more in the breaking of bread.

THE LIVING MIRACLE

Here in a darkened church, in a vacant aisle,
Far from the market cries and the common ken,
A woman kneels and sees from the altar smile
A vision of Love new-born for the needs of men.

Effortless, lo, at a word, from realms divine
Enters the God,— and there, in visible Bread,
Stands to be taken: there, a bodily sign,
Gives Himself as food to the lips unfed.

Starved she takes, and straightway in spirit is filled,—
Lifted and crowned, communion holds with saints:
Glory about her, joy in her pathway spilled,
Heaven stands open, under her feet earth faints.

Back to her garret she goes with Heavenly spoil,—
Shapes, for a pittance,— nay, for a love unpriced! —
Seam by seam, through vigilant hours of toil,
Raiment for those who turn their backs on Christ.

THE LIVING MIRACLE

You, who mock at her faith, what gift have you
Like to this which she bears in her heart all day?
Have you one miracle left that your hand can do,
Mighty in mercy as this,— till you raise her pay?

Here, in a darkened church, in a vacant aisle,
Far from the market cries and the common ken,
The woman kneels, and sees from the altar smile
A vision of Love newborn for the needs of men.

ST. FRANCIS TO HIS LADY OF POVERTY

Break but the heart that's filled with Thee,
  And men shall all Thy sweetness know,
As from the shattered casket, free,
  The precious ointments flow.

Then is the house with fragrance filled
  Where for each guest Love spreads the feast;
And there of all her treasure spilled
  The casket lies released.

Ah! with what pain my heart has held
  This wonder of all wonders stored!
O Beauty, that mine eyes have spelled,
  Go forth to greet Thy Lord!

EASTER DAWN

The leaping heart which almost burst
For joy, the eager feet which ran,
Lo, these, though fain, were not the first,
When Love rose up and light began.

More swift with healing in His hands
Was He than man's most breathless speed;
There, while we haste, behold He stands
Our risen Lord raised up indeed.

The brightness of His Father's face
No shades of darkness could enclose:
Before we sought His resting-place,
Swifter than light again He rose!

II. POEMS OF WAR-TIME

A GOODLY HERITAGE

In the palace of our Lord
Wise and lovely things lay stored,
Deeply hidden, fenced about:
God made man to search them out.
There, held safe from age to age,
Slept the goodly heritage.

Soul was given him for a key
To unlock the mystery;
Heart for courage, eyes for sight,
Hands to handle it aright:
Through the fastened gates the prize
Gleamed like peeps of Paradise.

There, to bless his future need,
Man beheld new forms of speed,
Wondrous shapes in stone and steel,
Cube, and curb, and banded wheel,—
Steeds with fiery breath that run
Clad in traces of the sun:

Saw thick darkness change to light,
Feet up-mount equipped for flight,
Heaviest mass a lifted load,
And the world an open road,
Linking up from end to end
Man with fellow man his friend.

In that vision blest his eyes
Watched the coming Paradise,—
City walls, whose upward span,
Statured to the scale of man,
Sheltered, amid streets of gold,
Fruits and fountains manifold.

So, for that far-distant day,
Sleep and sloth he put away;
For the gain of that great spoil
Body and brain gave up to toil;
In the palace of his Lord
Searched, and traced, and found reward.

Delving amid reefs and rocks,
He unloosed the magic locks;—
Wealth in mine and mountain stored,
Powers from deep waters poured,

One by one, with eager brain,
These he picked and made his gain.

Thus, with toil from age to age
Man brought home his heritage;
Wheresoe'er his shafts he drave,
Under wood, or wind, or wave,
Thence with ministry of might
Sprang new forms of life and light.

And of what his toil set free
Now he holds the mastery:
Now to heart and hand and eyes
Comes possession of the prize;
Now, as Time unbinds the spell,
Opens — lo, the pit of Hell!

. . . . . .

Through the sundered gates, behold,
  Statured to the scale of man,
Shattered streets more red than gold,
  Blood where once sweet waters ran!

Under cannon-guarded walls,
  Maimed and bruised with bleeding breast,
Sisyphus his burden hauls
  Up to heights that win no rest!

Scorched with fire, and scourged with steel,
  Blindly into darkness hurled,
Mad Ixion spins his wheel
  Round a desolated world.

Here the Tree of Life gives out
  Sickness from a leprous root;
Tantalus his lips of drought
  Strains toward a poisoned fruit.

Shrinks the fountain from its springs,
  Vintage all lies dead and done;
Icarus has filched the wings,
  Phaeton drives the sun!

THE BANDS OF ORION

Down steps Orion to the west,
  High-headed, starry-eyed,
Watchful beneath his warrior-crest,
  His sword upon his side.

Amid the unnumbered stars of night
  He fills his measured space,
And covers under points of light
  The fashion of his face.

He makes no gesture, gives no sign;
  Yon form is all we know.
So, belt and scabbard used to shine
  Millions of years ago.

Upon his brow endures no frown,
  No tumult stirs his breast;
In martial stride he still goes down
  With all his stars at rest.

THE BANDS OF ORION

Naught can they tell us by their light
  What binds them to his car:
There, at the chariot-pole of night
  He stands, a shape of war.

When Earth was young and Night was old
  That harness he put on,
And girt for war, with nails of gold
  The belted warrior shone.

Now to the east he sets his heel,
  Or now goes westward bound;
And still, like flies upon his wheel,
  The stirless stars move round.

Across the regions of the night,
  Across the darkened lands,
He travels on in changeless might,
  And none may loose his bands.

Onward he goes with planted heel,
  The charioteer of Mars;
The Kingdoms broken on his wheel
  Are stirless as the stars.

HARVEST

(1914)

It was the time of year
When green leaf turns to gold,
Earth's harvest did appear
More full than hands could hold.

Within her girth, unspent,
The immemorial food
Of Nature's sacrament
Lay stored for all her brood.

Boundless from hill to plain
The harvest-field was white;
Long leagues of living grain
Stood up and drank the light.

. . . . . .

Up from uneasy rest
The Reaper raised his form,
He bared his grisly breast,
His heart went knit for storm.

Westward his course he took
A destined goal to gain,
And thrust his reaping-hook
To the fair Flemish plain.

By towers of crumbling stone,
Ghosts of an older strife,
Where no fresh trumpets blown
Shall rend the dead to life,—

By time-deserted posts,
Where once loud bugles blew
To rouse the peaceful hosts
Which sleep at Waterloo,—

Where erst his power was known
He smote and smote again:
With every stroke lay strown
A hundred miles of men.

As back he went or forth
A thousand woes had birth;
Westward, and south, and north,
He trod a shrieking earth.

HARVEST

Of each beleaguered town
He made his threshing-floor,
Smote till dead walls were down
Where streets had lived before:

Struck with his flail and spilled,
Till shocks of scattered grain
In ruined garners filled
Liège, Namur, Louvain.

Where the red Reaper reaped
Down fell the living wave,
And quick and dead lay heaped
In one tremendous grave.

THE NEW NARCISSUS

While war through Flanders sweeps in flood,
And death goes flaring by,
Above the steam and stench of blood
Spring larks are soaring high;

And in the pause you hear their song,
While underneath, at rest,
Amid those mounds of human wrong
The young lie in the nest.

Down-nodding to the pit of death
The daffodils are through,
And shake their petals full of breath
Above a breathless crew.

Blithely they quaff and cast away
Light from their golden eyes,
Where, blind to all the beams of day,
The new Narcissus lies:

THE NEW NARCISSUS

Who, in that dark and dreadful hole
  Beheld a vision blest,
Saw the desire of his young soul,
  And drank, and there found rest.

Within those eyes, beyond our ken,
  Shut fast from present use,
The vision waits. There lie the men
  Who kept the Christmas Truce.

BLIND LOVE

"Oh, why do ye stand so still, lad,
In yon strange cloak of green?
And why have ye shut with a will, lad,
Them eyes as were once so keen?"

"*There's a grumble of guns on the hill, lass;*
But under it, where I lie,
The ground of my grave is still, lass;
And stiller beneath am I."

"Ah, ye do well to be still, lad,
For weary your days have been,
With grumble o' guns on the hill, lad;
But why have ye got on green?"

"*In the country where I have been, lass,*
All blotted with blood and clay,
It's a colour I haven't seen, lass,
For many a weary day."

BLIND LOVE

"Ah, well have ye done to cast, lad,
Your khaki coat for a green;
But why must ye still shut fast, lad,
Them eyes I have not yet seen?

"What for do ye stand so blindly,
When it's you as I've longed to see?
If ye can't look at me kindly,
Why did ye come to me?"

"*Ah, sure, I'm back to the place, lass,*
Where oft I've longed to be,
For a look at the bonny face, lass,
I'd be giving my eyes to see.

"*So say a kind prayer for me, lass,*
In a bed that's lonely and bare;
But how can I let ye see, lass,
The eyes,— when the eyes ain't there?"

. . . . . .

Blind Love, now tell me whether
A ghost finds what it seeks?
Two lovers stand close together,
And the tears run down their cheeks.

SEARCH-LIGHTS

Lord, give man eyes to see! 'Twas some
  Blind fool, for sure, that said
How lightless London had become
  A city of the dead!

A city of the dead! I would
  The dead again might rise
To look upon a sight so good
  For tired hearts and eyes.

Here, amid miles of street and square,
  A curfew without sound
Has rung its knell; and everywhere
  Men walk on holy ground.

Along the now ungarish street,
  Which once shut out the night,
The lamps stand veiled; about their feet
  Lie little pools of light;

SEARCH-LIGHTS

And over paving-stone and park,
  From life-long vigil loosed,
Trees that had never known the dark
  Take darkness home to roost.

And light-shy birds have come to town:
  Loud through the night the cry
Of owls is heard, and up and down
  The 'bus routes bat-wings ply.

While overhead, on beams of light,
  Like angels to and fro,
Pale messengers in level flight
  The leaping search-lights go.

They lift and lower, they shift and glance,
  Pause, point, then forward run,
And couch an ever-wheeling lance
  Where foeman there is none.

Now since our darkness gives us light
  Such lovely things to see,
Here let the tale be told aright
  For all posterity:

SEARCH-LIGHTS

How through the years, while bloody Mars
  Smote mortals for their sins,
London's dim streets were lit with stars
  Because of Zeppelins.

So, at our need, let Heaven engage
  As kind a part to play,
And show to mortals blind with rage
  The stars upon their way.

CORPUS CHRISTI

(*How We kept the Feast at Karlsruhe*)

Body of Christ! The bells were loud,
And the streets were thronged, and a joyous crowd
Stood waiting therein for Thee to pass,
O Maker of men, who died for sin;
O Bread of the Mass, O Body of Christ!

Life was heavy, and hearts were sore,
For over the world went the battle's roar;
But here were women with joy in their eyes,
And the place was happy with children's cries,
And hymns were singing: O Body of Christ!

Over the place broad wings came winging; —
Their hum was loud above tower and street.
What angels are these? What gift are they bringing,
O Prince of Peace, to lay at Thy Feet
In the sight of this crowd? O Body of Christ!

CORPUS CHRISTI

In honour of Thee the people meet:
In honour of Thee are the eagles fleet?
They open their talons, they let down death,
And a hundred bodies are empty of breath,
And four-score children. O Body of Christ!

"A tooth for a tooth, and an eye for an eye."
Worshipping Thee, the eagles fly;
And because in Thee they have put their trust,
(For righteous are we, and our cause is just)
This have they done! O Body of Christ!

For, God be our aid, we fight with a foe
Who to us and to ours did even so:
On us they came and slew in the night,
So we slay now in the noonday light
Their old and their young. O Body of Christ!

The better the day, the better the deed.
So let them go, and give ear, and take heed!
Now unto the day hath the doom sufficed,
O Corpus Christi! O Body of Christ!
O Love that died for a world in need!

THE LEAVENED BREAD

"Throughout all Eternity,
I forgive you; you forgive me.
As our dear Redeemer said,—
'This the Wine, and this the Bread.'"

WILLIAM BLAKE.

GIVE Me thy kiss, brother,—
Kiss, ere we part.
That and no other
Shall comfort My Heart.

Where the ground fallows,
All mixed with dross,
Thou from thy gallows
Shalt see My Cross.

Friends will be turning
Their faces from Me:
Better for learning
Thy face I'll then see,
And on My lips burning
Thy last kiss shall be.

Stronger than love was
Now is thy hate:
Why, where the proof was,
Com'st thou so late?

Since thou wouldst test Me,
Kiss, and have done:
Then can I rest Me
From under the sun.

Man's heart My school:
Love was My teaching,
Deaf to My preaching
Thou prov'st Me a fool.

I, on the wrong quest,
Sought for thy heart.
Take, then, thy conquest,—
Kiss Me, and part!

Go, but first hearken,
O child of My pain,
Ere the day darken
Where we two hang slain:

THE LEAVENED BREAD

Thou dost betray Me:
So let Me die.
But when men slay Me,
And I hang high

Outside the city
'Mid mockings of men,
Brother, for pity
Think of Me then!

And when thou hast tasted
Thy lonelier grave,
Him thou hast wasted
Come back to, and save!

In the Potter's Field
When thou liest dead,
My heart in thine
Shall be buried.

From the Potter's Field,
There, where it lies,
When the graves yield
My Body shall rise.

And men shall know
When the grave stands riven
How that thy body
To Me was given.

In the Potter's Field
When men love thee,
Then shall they yield
Their hearts unto Me.

Give Me thy kiss, brother
Kiss, and be dumb!
This way — no other —
My Kingdom shall come.

THE CROSSWAY

I

As Christ for those who knew not what they did,
So these your sons, for you their mother died.
Now in that wondrous gift your guilt lies hid,
And in your blood your blame stands sanctified.
O Land, behold your sons! O Sons, behold

Your mother! Her proud heart, pierced by the sword,
Still bleeds for you: still to the blood-stained mould
She stoops her eyes — but looks not at her Lord.

II

The Lord of Life, upon the day He died
For love, between two thieves hung crucified.
Of whom, with bitter railing, one spake thus:
"If Thou be Christ, now save Thyself and us!"
The other said: "Alike condemned we be,

And suffer justly for our sins; but He
Nothing hath done amiss. Remember me,
Lord, in Thy kingdom come!" Whereat his eyes,
By pure humility and love made wise,
Saw out of Hell the gates of Paradise.
Now, of these twain, ye that would pray take heed,
And choose the prayer most fitted to your need!
Above the embattled nations Love still stands;
And to both sides He stretches out His hands.

THE CRUSADER'S TOMB

O NAMELESS warrior, whose feet
Have borne thee to thy goal,
Pray thou for me, while dust and heat
Lie heavy on my soul!

Here, in what heritage of ease,
The years give rest to them,
Because of old thy crossèd knees
Knelt in Jerusalem!

And tell me, were the gates of pearl?
And were the streets of gold?
And did the Tree of Life unfurl
Leaves lovely to behold?

Shone she with jewels round about
Her deeply-founded wall,
Making her very stones cry out
Of Love who died for all?

THE CRUSADER'S TOMB

And did the vision of that Mount
  Kindle in thee such flame
That Grief forgot her old account
  When home the warrior came?

And did the face of past desire
  Seem then an empty show,
Giving to lips which once were fire
  A form more white than snow?

O dear acquaintance of that spot,
  Befriend an exile's prayer!
So shall the heart that sees it not
  Be as it had been there.

Let far-off good which was my trust
  Bring healing to mine eyes,
Or make me even as the dust
  In Holy Land that lies!

ARMAGEDDON — AND AFTER

We fought at Armageddon for the freedom of the world:
I fought, and you fought, and here our bones lie mixed.
By the master-hands which held us, eastward and westward hurled,
We were shattered, we fell down, for the place and time were fixed.

Tell me, O brother Bone, what here remains to know:
Marched we as comrades then, or foemen, ere we died?
Was it my hand or yours which dealt the darkening blow:
Was it your hand or mine which turned the blow aside?

Took I my brother's life: what better life was mine?
Fought I for freedom; — of freedom so bereft?

Had I the clearer sight to read the Heavenly sign?
Had I the cleaner heart, to keep my hands from theft?

We fought at Armageddon for the freedom of mankind.
And while we fought, behind us freedom was bought and sold!
The light that lit these sockets is out, and we are blind.
Now with blind eyes we read; now with dead hands can hold.

Bone to my bone you lie, companion of my pains!
What link of life is this, which binds us wrist to wrist?
These, brother, these are not links but only chains,
Worn by the living, that dying lips have kissed.

Millions we marched; and the rattle of the drums
Drowned the rattle of our chains, and the shouting held our ranks.
For sweet to our ears was "The conquering hero comes,"
And sweet to our hearts "A grateful Country's thanks."

ARMAGEDDON — AND AFTER

We fought at Armageddon for the brotherhood of Man;
And safe within their fences the tricksters plied their trade.
'Twas the old fight we fought; and it ends as it began:
The gamblers held their hands till the Last Trump was played.

We fought at Armageddon for the freedom of mankind:
I fought, and you fought, and here our bones lie strewn.
The flesh is stript from off us, the chains remain behind,
And the freedom that we fought for is an unremembered tune.

III. BEAUTIFUL HEART

BEAUTIFUL HEART

I

Restful he watches, and hears the trouble of sleep,—
Love, the shepherd of men, with his gaze set far:
Over the darkened fold and the herded sheep,
Round the breast of the world he watches a Star.

II

Under him earth moves slow; far off lies the dawn;
Comes no gleam as yet through the darkness felt:
Naught but yon Star for a sign; till (night withdrawn)
Faint or awakened Heaven the Star shall melt.

III

Heart, unto Love give all, and the rest is well!
Pain thou shalt know, and sorrow,— bear grief and scorn;

Yet have the high Gods come for a shrine to the shell;
Thy flesh hath endured the birth for which Earth was born!

. . . . . .

IV

Beautiful Heart, no rest in the world for me!
Sleeping I find thee not, and waking know thou art gone.
Here is a door set wide for a coming that never shall be;
And all my world is a want for the heart that I rest not on.

V

Beautiful Heart, ah! hadst thou never been born
Thus attainless to me, Love would have spared me this:—
Hunger, and thirst, and longing, the gentle light of thy scorn,
And coldly from mine thy gaze turning away the bliss.

. . . . . .

VI

Faithful the lover cries, "Ah, once to have proved
Life in the quick delight of the flesh that was then so fair!"
Nay, fond heart, not so shall the face of the deep be moved:
Prove thy life upon this,— a joy that has passed to air —!

VII

Surely the ills of Earth are many, and meet to be borne;
Hunger, and thirst, and cold, man's body was made to bear,
But oh, for the ills of Heaven! — the love that is paid by scorn,
And beauty silent and flown from the heart that it once spoke fair.

VIII

Shall I go sadder now, O Beloved, that the world holds thee,—
Breath of my bliss and pain? Was once to have known thee loss?

Sadder I needs must go, since ever mine eyes now see
Heights I may not attain, gulfs that I shall not cross.

. . . . . .

IX

Beautiful Heart, the dawn awakens in gold,—
Light, through its handmaid air, goes glancing free;
Heaven his wealth flings wide. With joy untold,
Somewhere, far off in the world, day shines on thee.

X

Love, like a mote, leaps forth to the morning beam,—
Down he glides, then up, and is off anew:
Butterfly Love, adrift on a golden stream,
Blessing the wide-eyed day that awakens you.

XI

Beautiful Heart, as the eyes that are blind love light,
With the love of a waterless land ere the rains appear,—

So without comfort of thee I attain my right,
So shall my heart by its hunger to thine be near.

. . . . . .

XII

Rises the lark with the dawn: dull earth at his feet
Wakes, and kindles, remote from the sounds that soar
Upward through light. But oh, more distant, more sweet,
The voice of my lover still heard — that I hear no more!

. . . . . .

XIII

Ah, Love divine, why then hast thou given me sense
To see, and hear, and clasp,— feel hunger and thirst?
Let me have help of these ere I vanish hence:
For man, though he love thee after, must love life first!

XIV

"Open thine eyes," said Love, "yea, tune thine ears,

Reach thy hand to the touch, and clasp, and be filled!
Till over the seas of desire, so tossed by fears,
Comes the spirit which rules when the waves are stilled."

. . . . . .

XV

Beautiful Heart, in my solitude now what track
Can I trace, as day brings day with never a word?
Now, when the voice is mute, how the hours come back
Of nights when you lay at my side, and no sound was heard.

. . . . . .

XVI

Faces of careworn men that in field and street
Pass me with looks resigned, Love lend you grace!
You, as you pass unknown, have quickened my feet;
Early or late, we come to the resting-place.

XVII

Surely, by care man comes to the wished-for goal;
Where runs the furrow, the hope of the harvest lies.

Come, then, Care, be fellow to body and soul,
Till the day of the sheaves brings cover for breast
and eyes!

XVIII

Doubtless Love shall return, in ways unguessed.
Out of the past comes memory bearing sheaves;
There when I turn, and heavy of heart seek rest
Birds of passage have hung all night in the eaves.

. . . . . .

XIX

Beautiful Heart, having held can I let thee go?
Nay! for with vision clear I count my gain.
Forth to the world's far ends the wind shall blow
This shape of dust. But on it thy touch will
remain.

XX

Oh, common dust, blown wide through the world's
highways,
Naught can I hold in scorn that I touch or see!
May not some lover's arms,— some lover's gaze —
Find you more fair than ever my love found me?

. . . . . .

XXI

Blindly I look on light as I knelt at the sacred knees,
And, gazing through eyes daubed thick with the healing clay, found Love!
For there, to left and to right, I saw men walking as trees,
And one in their midst, O form most fair! O nest for a dove!

XXII

High in the air, like clouds, an army of banners blew
Over the heads of women and men close-ranked for fight:
Where thousands came marching as one, there first I met you,—
And suddenly broke on my blindness a vision of light.

XXIII

I shall not see that City, made bright by the boughs that wave
Green in the golden streets, when Nations come to be healed:

But there, where the ransomed meet, they will
march by a dead man's grave;
And the light of thy love they have found will shine
on the potter's field.

. . . . . .

XXIV

Go, rejoice in thy strength, fair Branch, and with
lifted head
Join the glad throng of thy fellows, leap up into
light and air!
Here, for comfort at length, I have found me a
marriage-bed,—
Darkness, and no more pain,— a rest from the days
that were.

XXV

Beautiful root of Life, made ready and quick to
grow,
Take from me this gift,— dark mould and a bed of
clay:
So shall you find it rife, with the sheddings of long
ago,—
Autumn's fall, and the drift of a world that has
learned decay.

. . . . . .

XXVI

Sightless and scentless, here lie ghosts of lives that like you
Had beauty of form and limb, and the grace of a thousand dawns:
They, too, tasted the cool of a morning crowned with dew,—
Heard, when the world first woke, the voices of upland lawns.

. . . . . .

XXVII

Few are the years thou hast known, O face of a thousand springs!
Few are thy years, and yet this year to thy heart comes grief.
Gentle to me in its stroke that breath of severance brings
Down from thy boughs above, to my heart in the mould — one leaf!

XXVIII

Thou at my heart set safe, O Beloved, and I at thy feet!
Grant me this lowest place: then take from me

All that thou hast of need,— convert into life and heat
These ghosts of a day now gone, that Love sets free!

XXIX

Take, though nothing remains to give that is new!
This mould,
Bearing the taint of age, lies dark and sodden as mud;
Yet once in a former time, it wore the colour of gold,—
And red in the loud wind's rage these drippings of autumn's blood.

. . . . . .

XXX

What pale hand is this that touches my brow,
Coming so late to loose the bars of my cage?
"Back from life in the past, I bring to thee now
Peace, and the light thereafter — the gift of age.

XXXI

"Life, once thine, comes now, when the fever's still,
Back on the flow of Time: so down to the stream,

Not as Narcissus, stoop and attain thy fill;
Look, and see how fair of face was the dream!"

. . . . . .

XXXII

Here is to mark where the print of a foot hath been;
So, on my heart, was set the seal of thy worth.
Blessed, indeed, are the eyes in the things they have seen!
Can I, Beloved, forget how the feet of a god touched earth?

IV. MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

EHEU, FUGACES!

MARY,

FIRST PRINCESS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

(*Born April* 1605; *Died December* 1607)

WHEN Stuart reigned, ere yet began
The struggle with the Puritan,
Ere King and Commons met for fight
O'er regal claim and chartered right,—
There fell a day when tidings spread
How for the royal marriage-bed
April had flowered; for surely then
Life was as blossom to man's ken
Around that birth; and who could see,
Where laughing courtiers stooped the knee,
How in the days so soon to be
Lay pains, and penalties, and dread?

And so through chambers where more late
Her brother Charles encountered fate,—
Careless of how the seasons ran
Those toddling feet their race began,
And over hearts which paved a way
Balanced their weight with tender sway.

Her eyes the sunlight did absorb,
The spinning world became her orb
Of power — so fairy-like she lit
And played her little pranks on it;
And like a charioteer in chase,
Urging it still to swifter pace,
Cried to the rolling wheels below —
"I go, I go! Away I go!"

Two years, a spendthrift in her joy,
She made her father's Court a toy:
The wisest statesman was her fool,
A kingdom's rulers owned her rule
In laws delightful to obey,
When so like gossamer they lay
That by a breath goes blown away!

Alas, like giver and like gift!
Quick to alight, and quick to lift
And vanish from its fairy form
As snow-flake on the face of storm —
So came she and so passed: her feast
Of love, and life, and laughter ceased
All in a day; her little head
Down, down she laid upon a bed,

And tired of earth, rejecting care,
Fluttered her baby hands on air
And cried, in prophecy of woe,
"I go, I go! Away I go!"

With fluttered hands and words like wings,
Thus spake she her last soothsayings;
And on that head untouched by rime
Light-handed brothers, Death and Time,
Shook down a single flake of snow.—
"I go, I go! Away I go!"

Warm snowflake then lay kissed by cold,
While Earth her wintry message told;
"Ah! snowflake, look not here for thaw
Nor any sunshine that can draw
Thy sweetness out! Turn back and blow
Into those pleasant fields where grow,
With wide and dew-embracing eyes,
The waiting flowers of Paradise:
Into their hearts let fall thy snow!"
"I go, I go! Away I go!"

So runs the tale: of all her pains
And pleasures this alone remains,—

EHEU, FUGACES!

This wing-like cry, this answering word
To some remote and secret bird
That, gazing with prophetic eyes
From the bright bowers of Paradise,
Saw in the dreadful years ahead,
Joy withered, mirth disowned and dead,
And beauty disinherited.
So with a heart of grace made wise
To perils undiscerned by man,
Quick at that fluted note she flies
The coming of the Puritan!
The grief, the gallantry, the grace,
The ghosts of her ill-fated race
And all its pageantry of woe,
Here mingled for a moment show,
While to the ear that hearkens cries
The seer in the babe's disguise
(Of crowns, so soon to be laid low!),
"I go, I go! Away I go!"

Through the fixed slabs of mouldered tombs
This single blossom breaks and blooms;
Crowned with that cry, it passes hence
Immortal in its transience.

EHEU, FUGACES!

So with eternal waft of wing
Fleets over earth the breath of spring,
And through each mood in motion free
Reveals its immortality.

CRADLE-SONG

Sleep, my babe, your road of dreams
By the fire-flies shall be lighted:
See them link their tingling teams
Round you, lest you go be-nighted!

Off to-night your father flies
Honey from the stars to bring:
Star-town, ah, how far it lies!
Thither he goes travelling.

But at daybreak, big with news,
Backward riding he shall come,
Bright of hoof across the dews,
Beating on a golden drum!

"WITHERSHINS"

A WITCHCRAFT CASE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Once, upon the spring of day
On the summer side of May,
Good men faring forth to toil,
Ere the sun had warmed the soil,
Found an old crone, withered, worn,
Sitting by a field of corn.

There amid the springing green
Of the young blades she was seen
Bending an attentive head
To the new year's make of bread.
And wherever wheat stood high,
Testing it with careful eye
And brown fingers, lean and long,
Thus she crooned her wheat-ear song:

"When the corn turns withershins,
Short's the yield which there begins;

But when sun-gates bends the knee
Plenty shall the reaping be.
Only withershins be here:
Folks will starve and bread be dear!"

So, with old eyes on the young
Blades of corn, she sat and sung.
And those good men, passing near,
Heard her song and shook for fear:
And, the better to win ease,
Haled her to the justices,—
All because on that May morn,
Weatherwise, she sang the corn!

So, for singing of that same,
Charged and tried, she went to flame.
And, to prove them right, that year
People starved, and bread was dear!

Oh, full many an English field
Have I walked, and watched the yield —
Starved and stunted, because still
"Withershins" is how men will:
'Gainst the light they sin and sin,
Turning to the dark within

"WITHERSHINS"

(Each so set to have his way)
From the wholesome light of day!

And above the cornfield bends
An old crone, whose peaceful ends
Men must still traduce. Her ghost,
Wasted lives, and harvests lost,
Mark upon the fields of Time
How continuous a crime
Is the justice man has done
"Withershins"— against the sun!

THE IRON AGE

O ye, that seek through blood and tears
The justice which kind earth hath lacked,
Marvel not ye because man fears
To drop his old coercion act.

Whose record in the past was dark
Sees darkness in the future, too;
Because with iron he made his mark,
And by that same brand he judges you.

The unborn age afflicts his mind,
Of powers misused he stands afraid;
Haunted he goes, and hears behind
The worn and wasteful past upbraid.

His stripes ye bear; but when ye gain
Your victory — then comes recompense,
And ye shall mend his muddled brain
With comfortable common sense.

THE BALLAD OF DEAD JUDGE JEFFREYS

Will this be true? Oh, it sounds like true!
Is Jeffreys dead at last?
They say that the breath he drew for death
Went out like a furnace blast.

They say he cried so horribly,
That no one durst come nigh;
But only a bat and an old grey rat
Sat up to see him die.

They came at morn and found him dead,
Alone on his truss of straw:
And the hair stood up on the corpse's head
At that which the dead eyes saw.

So horribly the dead eyes stared; —
That last sight had so frozen them,—
That not a man or woman dared
Reach out a hand to close on them.

And the body, so twisted and torn about
By all the fear and hate in him,—
When the women came to lay him out
They couldn't even straighten him.

For out of the earth, like a great black mole,
The Devil had come from Hell for him;
And when the sexton went to toll,
The church-bell wouldn't knell for him.

So ill a death he had to die,
It surely had been kept for him:
And blind, indeed, had been the eye,
Had anybody wept for him!

Down in the ground where he now lies
The long safe grass shall cover him;
And every bird in air that flies
Shall pass with a wide wing over him.

Judge Jeffreys, Judge Jeffreys,
So now you're dead and done!
And freely again falls down the rain,
And easily shines the sun.

THE WOOD-MAZE

In the forest day by day
I and Bird-in-hand would play.
Hide-and-seek, or touch-and-go
Kept us running to and fro,
Happy on forbidden ground:
Lovely dangers lurked around.

Thus one day her game began:
"Catch me, catch me, if you can!
Catch me! Catch me!" To her side
Running quickly, oh, I tried! —
Saw her dancing up and down,
Bobbing curls and eyes of brown.

Light of heart, and light of foot,
Sprang she from the hazel-root,
Climbing through the hazel-boughs
Up into the fairies' house:
There a moment cried her fill,—
"Catch me! Catch me!" Then was still.

And the fairies, green and gold,
Lighted down and took soft hold
Of my dear; and like a leaf
Up in air — oh! fairy thief,
Fairy thief! — away sprang she,
Never to come back to me.

In the forest now all day,
Watching how the branches sway,
All alone with mother-wit
Here beneath the boughs I sit
And look up; and, when the breeze
Stirs the leaves upon the trees,
Know that she is one of these.

"Catch me! Catch me!" day by day
That is what they seem to say —
Fairy leaves of green and gold.
Light comes down and takes soft hold,—
Withers them; and then comes wind,—
Shakes them; how the woods are thinned!

Underneath the hazel shade
Here a bed of leaves I've made.
Comfort, comfort, oh! come down,
Bobbing curls and eyes of brown!

Let us end as we began:
Catch me! Catch me, if you can!

Leaf, I cannot tell apart,
Grief for thee hath stretched my heart.
Every leaf that I see fall
Now I love; I keep them all.
Little comforts — such a crumb! —
"Catch me! Catch me!"— down they come.

Long it takes to make the bed
Where together we lie wed.
All alone with mother-wit
Here beneath the boughs I sit:
Down they come! and when the breeze
Lifts the last leaf from the trees,
I shall have her — one of these!

CONCERNING KISSES

Kisses, kisses, what are ye?
Atoms of felicity;
Offshoots of a life that's fleeting,
Ages long a moment meeting,
Showing, in a nick of time,—
Better than in seasoned rhyme,
Or than any old wife's saying,—
Kindness more than wisdom's weighing
Counts, but cannot count the paying.
Youth and age herein are one,
And nothing's new beneath the sun.

Kisses, kisses, what are ye?
Sweet to hear, and touch, and see.
Is it sense ye thrive upon,
Lacking which the rest were gone?
Or, were man of sense bereft,
Would there still be kisses left?

Oh, were I deaf, or dumb, or blind,
Should I yet not have a mind —
Kisses, kisses, with a will,
To receive and render still?

Kisses, kisses, what say ye? —
Have ye any eyes to see;
Have ye hearts between your wings
As ye fly and leave your stings,
Playing, with such tender show,
Teasing games of touch-and-go?
Do the senses ye infect
Find reward in retrospect;
Or in foretaste, fancy free,
Miss the sweets of memory?

Kisses, kisses, ye can be
Fickle, faithful, bond or free;
Tongue-tied tales of love unchanged,
Trimmings to a taste outranged,
Tenders taken on approval,
Fixtures subject to removal,
Wayside weeds, or planted plots,
Pick-me-quicks; forget-me-nots,

Weak as water, red as wine,
Nectar-draught or anodyne,
Mixture, taken as before,
Thrice a day,— or nevermore!

Kisses, kisses, off and be
What ye will,— the choice is free!
Sweets in surreptitious corners,
Lucky plums for good Jack Horners,
Honey-sweet or stony-hearted,
Welcome change or dear-departed,
Unforeseen or long-expected,
Modest, coy, demure, dejected,
Pretty poutings, dainty purses,
Nesting-places, covert curses,
Oft-times thefts, but sometimes prizes,—
Such a many makes and sizes:
Why should I the risk refuse,
If I still can pick and choose?

I have found in your embraces
Such avowals, such fair faces,
Such concealments, such disguises,
Such assurance, such surprises,

Such dear safety, such sweet dangers,
Such familiars, such kind strangers,—
Oh, if such sweet things were not,
Better man stayed unbegot,—
Courtship better unconceived
Than so robbed, bereft, and grieved!

When on Jordan's banks I stand,
Back to Life I'll kiss my hand;
When I draw my latest breath,
Then I'll blow a kiss to death.

THE OLD MOON

Beautiful old Moon! a sennight ago thou wast young:
Now from west unto east the weight of thy head is hung.
Ah, Moon, Moon! where in the world hast thou been,
To grow so old in a week? What in the world hast thou seen?

And it seems that I hear her say, "Two lovers lay heart to heart,
Only a week ago; and now I have watched them part."
Only a week ago? To me it seems as a year:
Autumn has gone, and winter has come; and the woods are sere.

Ah, Moon, Moon! When thy head was turned to the west,
There, on the heart of my love, surely my heart had rest!

But now thou hangest thy head to the gleam of the
eastern sky;
And I dream and wish I were dead, so restless of
heart am I!

ABSENT AND PRESENT

Through morning meads we broke the dew,
  And heard the hidden skylark sing,
Oh, goodly sound, when, having you,
  I wanted for no other thing!
And ah, how plainly cried his tongue —
"All grief is old, all joy is young!"

Through moving mists around the wood
  The daylight came in grey disguise,
A pallid ghost. Then as we stood,
  I marked the hunger of your eyes;
And all your thoughts had flown away,
Back to the East and far Cathay!

For ever in your veins must run
  The rover's blood, so strange to me!
You heard the call; you saw the sun
  Rise red across the Indian sea;
So sundered stood we, side by side —
Two fates which seas and lands divide!

And now alone through twilit mead,
I break the dew: yet not alone,
Still, as the skylark sings, I read
As fair a meaning in its tone;
For now he sings of you, my dear,
"The near is far, the far is near!"

IN A GARDEN

In the twilight carols a bird. It is March here still:
The boughs hang bare, and the earth and the air are chill.
And — had I my will — have I any song to be heard:
Any voice to make others rejoice — not a word?
Not a word!

His heart, out of gladness within, pours gladness without.
No nook in this garden that hears him — no alley or glade —
But sounds like the arbours of Eden while he is about:
His voice in the garden is God's, and has made me afraid.

"Where are you? Where are you?" he cries. "I am here! I am here!"

Comes a voice out of cover responding: — alas, but
not mine!
I have eaten the bread of the wise, I am drunken
with care;
I know I am mortal. But he, that knows not, is
divine.

LOVE AT THE FARM

The little birds in copse and hatch
  Were singing as their throats would break;
The little nestlings in the thatch
  Were crying hungrily awake;
The little bantam on the green,
  With sunlight ruddy in his comb,
Went strutting eager to be seen:
  And thou, my love, wast coming home!

The beauteous warbling of the birds,
  The simple things they had to say,
The callow beaks, so full of words,
  Did make a music of the day;
That bit o' sunbeam bright as blood,
  So like a feather in the comb,
Through all creation seemed to flood,
  When thou, my love, wast coming home.

LOVE AT THE FARM

Oh, what a holding has the heart
To make the little seem so great!
The lagging minutes tick apart,—
And every tick's an hour to wait!
And all my heart goes up and down
Like to a ship upon the foam,
And perilous far's the way to town,
When thou, my dear, art coming home!

Be earth so little, and sun so great,
As wise astronomers have said: —
Together at eve they meet and mate,
And rosy, rosy is the bed.
The lonely star which lights the sky,
The glow-worm biding in the gloam,
Oh, what be these but thou and I? —
And thou, my dear, art coming home.

THE TWO LOVES

When curfew-bells begin,
And the log-fire hisses,
I covered Jeannie in
From head to foot with kisses.

There, in the glow
And flicker of the ingle,
I gave her for to know
How a man loves single:

I gave her for to know,
When the heart needs mating,
How hard a road to go
Was the long lone waiting.

Her face was all a mist,
Her dear eyes tear-laden,
To find herself so kissed,
And man so love a maiden.

THE TWO LOVES

Ah! but she did love!
With kind lips so quiet,
While my heart above
Was all storm and riot.

And looking deep I saw,
In all its woman's meaning,
How her heart would draw
My heart to have its leaning.

For my heart was fain,
Oh, fain to be a-mating;
But hers saw the pain
Of the long lone waiting.

So there, in the light,
Beside the dying ember,
I gave her all that night
My kisses to remember.

. . . . . .

A cold dawn came;
Then parted our embraces;
We blew the ash to flame
On tear-wet faces;

THE TWO LOVES

We drank the last cup
  And we shared the last platter;
And pale the light went up,
  And birds began to chatter.

And then she oped the door,
  And there I left her standing,
As I went down to the shore
  To the ship beside the landing.

And far out from sea
  I saw the white shawl flutter,
As her hand waved to me
  The thoughts she could not utter.

Oh! a man's love is strong
  When fain he comes a-mating.
But a woman's love is long
  And grows when it is waiting.

A SONG OF THE DALES

Up the long dale flowing
  The sunlight came like wine,
And through the green meads, lowing,
  With Sally came the kine.
She came up the dale
  As I was on the hill;
And I stood and gave a hail,
  Crying "Sally!" with a will.

Away, so like a bird,
  And all along the hill,
Here, there, in flight I heard
  The echo of it still.
Fainter and fainter gone,
  My voice rang far and wide;
By pitch and peak it rambled on,
  And "Sally! Sally!" cried.

She turned, she looked up;
  I saw her face shine,

A SONG OF THE DALES

Golden as a buttercup,
A cup all filled with wine.
She drew a kerchief from her gown,
And waved it with a will;
And all about and up and down
My voice echoed still.

The woods and hills were naming her
With musical repeat:
An easy way, acclaiming her,
To make the dale sound sweet!
And "Sally! Sally!" goes the cry,
And dies among the hills;
But in the heart that lets it lie
It doubles as it stills.

When up the eastern valley,
The sunlight brims like wine,
Oh, sweet with news of Sally
Comes the lowing of the kine;
When cow-bells tinkle, "Up-come-up!"
Like chimes they seem to me;
In meadows full of buttercup
'Tis her face I see.

And "Sally! Sally!" my heart cries,
Till all the hills repeat;
And far the fancy of it flies
To make the whole world sweet.
For since to that kind heart I've won,
She's neither here nor there;
She's where the rising day doth run,
Where stars in the night shine fair,
She's in the buds when spring's begun,
And birds begin to pair;
She's over the dale, and out in the sun,
And abroad in the blowing air!

CORIN AT THE GATE

To Eden fast gated,
Heart-broken, belated,
Corin came weeping; ashamed was he.
On turret and border,
Attentive to order,
Stood watcher and warder, a wonder to see!

Quoth he, "O ye Powers
Who stand in high towers,
And bring to yon bowers the captive set free,
Let your bright sentry
Oppose not my entry,
For Phillada yonder sits weeping for me."

Questioned a hearer:
"From Eden what bearer
Of fables has told me a wonder so wise?
What sorrow of mortals
Can enter these portals,
Or come to draw tears out of Phillada's eyes?"

"Nay, if ye show not,"
Quoth Corin, "I know not
The way; yet the truth of it surely I know!
I that did treason
To love without reason,
Did yet for a season find pleasure below:

Found it, and lost it:—
For ever there crossed it
A shadow from realms were no shadow should be.
Paradise painless
Around her lay stainless;
Yet Phillada yonder was weeping for me!"

Quoth Michael, "O Corin,
Unfriended and foreign,
Foul are thy feet; with what eyes canst thou see?"
"One thing I see plainly,"
Quoth Corin, "though vainly:
How Phillada mainly sits weeping for me!
Love stays not her weeping,
Love holds in his keeping
Those eyes which unsleeping have pitied my pains;

Unslain by the glory
Which dazzles before me,
The love which she bore me for ever remains."

"Her weeping is painless,"
Quoth Michael, "and stainless
By grief is the fountain which brims in those eyes.
With laughter and singing
Her spirit up-springing
For ever goes winging its way to the skies."
"Does life in this garden,"
Quoth Corin, "so harden
Your hearts that ye read not her heart which is free?
Since Eden prevents not,
Of love she repents not,
And gladly, not sadly sits weeping for me.

But since ye now spurn me,
To torment I'll turn me,
And devils shall teach me how love was a lie.
But the dear heart ye cherish
Will dwindle and perish.
And Phillada's fountain will all run dry!"

Then Michael down drifted,
And caught and uplifted
Corin the sinner from paths of pain:
Swift, ere he waited,
The portals ungated:
Like chiming of bells was the fall of their chain.

And lo, as they entered
Where Paradise centred,
A vision of light amid light made dim,
Lovely and painless,
By sorrow made stainless,
Yonder sat Phillada weeping for him!

. . . . . .

This is the wonder:
In Heaven, and under,
Sinner and saint in their loves agree.
While sinner goes bleeding,
All Eden is pleading;
And Phillada there sits weeping for me!

COMPARISONS

Shall I with lowlier things compare
What in thy face I find more fair? —
Say —" cherry lips," or " cheek of rose ":
Defaming Thee by honouring those?
O Thou, most heavenward from thy birth,
Shall I so bring thee back to earth?

Nay, but the rose more sweet shall be
With distant memories of thee:
Red hanging fruit, removed from reach,
To lips disdaining touch or speech
Semblance may show of likeness tried,—
In part achieved, but more denied.

For beauty of the better part
Comes not from surface but from heart;
Well-flavoured fruit, soft-scented flower
Fill with delight their passing hour:
But thine — the beauties I more prize —
I know not where their sweetness lies.

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COMPARISONS

Years hence (when vanished) these will grow
More sweet than any sense may show;
So, in that dear defeat, mine eyes
Being opened shall become more wise!
Ah, Rose! Ah, Cherry! Hear me tell —
Best beauty stays invisible!

SIGNS AND WONDERS

If of my love you seek a sign,
  Her fair encountered face to know,
Oh, learn of other lips, not mine,
  The marks by which to go!

So fair is she, so fair is she,
  When down to evening sets the sun,
For fear lest parted they should be
  His colour to her face doth run.

So sweet is she, so sweet is she,
  That every air which round her blows
Hangs laden like a honey-bee,
  As in her breast he comes and goes.

So fond is she, so fond is she,
  That, every time we kiss and part,
More freely she bestows on me
  The deep possessions of her heart.

SIGNS AND WONDERS

So blind is she, so blind is she,
That, when beneath her looks I dwell,
A star-like gaze she bends on me,
And without measure loves me well!

If of that love you seek a sign,
That, mounting, you her heart may know,—
Oh, ask of angels' lips, not mine,
The way by which to go!

THE PRAYER

Pray thou for me,
Though, of Heaven am faithless:
Pray that thy power may be
Loosed, so that I go scatheless!
Not to the Fates above,
But to thine own heart, Love,
Pray till thy prayer remove
From me this danger:
So that I, loosed from thee,
Stand separate and free
Reft of my deity,
To thee a stranger!

SONG

Oh, why wast thou my love?
  And why was I thy lover?
I keep blue skies above:
  But thou — dull earth for cover.
Then what had Fate to prove,
Save, oh! — the far remove
Of what for me was once thy love
  From what remains thy lover?

THE LOVER'S KNOT

A RIVAL's worth I must admire,
Or not in rivalry persist:
Either must wish his virtues higher,—
Or wish that they did not exist.

Thy lover's truth I will adore;
Though she that loves him loves not me.
What? Wish him false? Then were I more,
Not less departed, Dear, from thee!

For since thy beauty lives to make
Valiance more flourish,— evil die:
How can I wish thy heart should take
Delight in one more mean than I?

And what were meaner, Dear, than this,—
To win by wishing he were worse?
Oh, could I so attain thy kiss,
Then Paradise would prove a curse.

But since to bliss I may not win
  Till from thy favour he remove:
This hope I'll cherish as my sin —
  That he for thee too good may prove.

OLD SWANAGE

I CAN remember the day,
(I've got the look on it still) —
I can remember when Swanage lay
Like a grey cat under the hill.

Curled in close by the shore,
There couldn't have been, all told,
(If you went to count) not above fourscore
Of houses; and all of 'em old:

All stone, all native rock,
And the roofs grey tile or thatch;
And never a door where you had to knock,—
You'd only to lift the latch.

New Town, it be all brick-red,
And slippy wi' roofs of slate;
And Swanage do look to be off her head,
'Er's been getting so grand o' late!

But I tell 'e them roofs won't last,—
  Nor never was meant to do.
Th' old roofs was here when the Spaniards passed
  In fifteen hundred and two![1]

But now — let 'em build their best —
  'Tis only built for the lease,
And when that falls in it falls; and the rest
  O' their doings be all of a piece.

It is only for show, not wear.
  Strange, that with none to see
But only ourselves, we took more care
  To have things as they'd ought to be.

'Twas quiet in these parts then,
  The months they left us alone;
And ne'er un about but Purbeck men
  Farming or working the stone.

Round under Tilly Whim rocks,
  Or out with nets in the bay,
Ye could hear at the quarries as clear as clocks,
  The stroke of their picks all day.

[1] Local date.

OLD SWANAGE

In summer we did have some
  Of the quality here for a spell,
And county families used to come
  And stay at the " Vic " Hotel.

But they never troubled with we,
  And we never troubled with 'en:
They'd go and they'd have their dip in the sea,
  And be off on their own agen.

When winter blew over the down
  There was never a stranger showed;
But once a week from Wareham town
  Come the coach by the old Corfe road.

Us all knew all on us then;
  And you never saw on the street
A body go by, one day out of ten
  As you hadn't been used to meet.

Ah, these were quietish parts,
  And quietish folk were we,
When the only carts were the quarrymen's carts
  Rumbling down to the quay.

OLD SWANAGE

We helped to build London town!
  And don't it some'ow seem sad
That London folk should 'a' brought us down,
  And broke up the homes we had?

For we've changed, there isn't a doubt,
  Though still we quarry the stone;
But the trippers come in and the trippers go out,
  And 'tisn't the place we've known.

There's only one thing that sticks,—
  The rookery up at the Grange.
They knows their own minds, they don't never mix:
  The rooks haven't made no change.

And here, inside o' my head,
  All looks as it used to do:
But come the day I'm counted for dead,
  Old Swanage 'll be dead too.

For I can remember the day,
  (I've got the look on it still.) —
I can remember when Swanage lay
  Like a grey cat under the hill.

GAFFER AT THE FAIR

This here day, it be fair day,
And the lads be all on the green;
And the booths and the shows all standing in rows,
With the cocoa-nut shies between.
There's roundabouts, and the showmen's shouts,
And fiddlers all through the town;
And your heart goes up, lad,
But my heart goes down.

The boxing-booths be full of youths,
And the market a prickle o' horns,
And chap after chap climbs up to the trap
Where a doctor's cutting their corns.
You hear the sound of the merry-go-round,
And you see how the boats are swung;
And your songs are to sing, lad,
But my song be sung.

There's flying leaps, and there's picture-peeps,
And a lion as none can tame;

And, added to that, a lady so fat
Her weight you never could name.
'Tis a jolly day for a holiday,
And that I don't deny;
But your days are to come, lad,
And my day's gone by.

And everywhere the fun of the fair
You can buy in ha'penny squirts;
And like a boy you make it a joy
To spatter the hats and skirts;
And each girl squeals to show she feels
It's a treat to be treated so;
Ah! your spirits be up, lad;
But my spirits be low!

I don't think as I used to think,
Nor do as I used to do;
But I still can drink as I used to drink,
A darned sight better than you!
You care a lot for the pewter pot,
But you're only the rag-tag sort;
A pint of stuff for you is enough,
But I'm for the double quart!

THE WISDOM OF THE ANCIENTS

Oh, young blood when the fever's on
Goes paddling in the Rubicon;
And, wading deeply for a bit,
Haply he cures the fever-fit.

But old blood, when its fevers die,
Comes to a Rubicon run dry;
And puzzled so much mud to find,
Regards it with a doubtful mind.

Yet like a mud-lark down he goes
And paddles contemplative toes;
And cries, "Oh, what a dirty joy!
To think I did it when a boy!"

Then out of that infectious mud,
With yellow fever in his blood,
Mounts horse, and preaches from the saddle
How sad and bad it was to paddle!

THE MARATHON RACE

(1908)

"Rejoice, we conquer!" So from Marathon word
Came, by the fleetest of foot, to the gates of Greece.
And the hills of Athens, the marble mother, were stirred,
And the echo thereof to the life in her womb cried "Peace!"

A bubble of wine from those lips, and a city was drunk
With the sudden joy of a birth when its throes are past:
Europe is saved from the flood, and Asia shrunk
Back to her borders for ever while Greece shall last!

While Greece shall last! — while joy for the strength of a steed
And delight in the limbs of a runner inspire man's will,

So long in our midst shall be found the Grecian
breed,
By the dark Semitic gods unconquered still.

O ghost of the great Pheidippides, hear that shout
Ringing the vast arena! You they acclaim —
You, the runner of old, whose life went out
In praise of your gods, young lord of the deathless
name!

HEROES

Fair is their fame who stand in earth's high places,
Rulers of men, strong-armed to break and bind.
Fairer the light which shines from comrade faces:
Those we have loved, and lost, and kept in mind.

These be our heroes, hearts unnamed in story,
Foot-firm that stood, and swerved not from the right;
Though in the world's eyes they attained no glory,
Girt to their goal they gained the wished-for height.

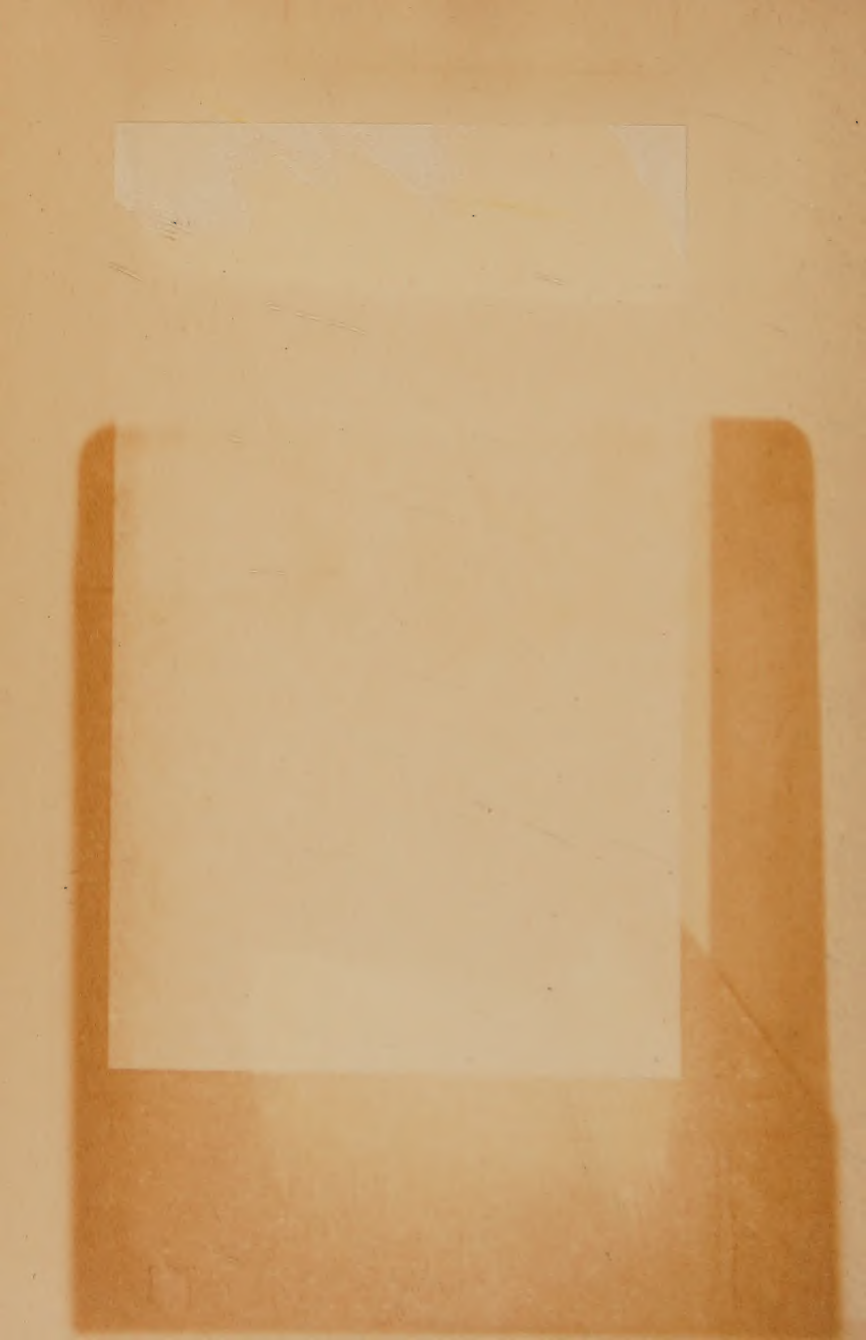
Now for reward no after-age shall sunder
These from their right to rest without a name.
Wide are the wings of heaven which fold them under,
Who to the Winds of God resign their fame.

HEROES

Blow, ye great Winds! Where'er man's spirit labours
Breathe on his lips breath from the life they spent!
Comrades to all their kind, dear friends and neighbours,
There, where the work goes well, they rest content.

They are the race,— they are the race immortal,
Whose beams make broad the common light of day!
Though Time may dim, though Death hath barred their portal,
These we salute, which nameless passed away.

THE END



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